

REMARKS

The above amendments and following remarks are responsive to the final Office Action mailed February 6, 2006. Upon entry of the above amendments, Claims 1, 8-9, 22, and 24 will have been amended, Claims 18-21, 23, and 25 will have been canceled, without prejudice or disclaimer, and Claims 1-17, 22, and 24 will be pending. No new matter has been introduced. No issues have been raised that require further consideration or search. Entry and reconsideration are respectfully requested.

Response to Claim Objections

Claims 1-24 have been objected to on the basis of various informalities.

The Claims have been amended to obviate the Examiner's objections.

Accordingly, the objection to the claims is now moot and should be withdrawn.

Response to Rejections under 35 U.S.C. §§ 102(e) and 103(a)

Claims 1, 7, 8, 13-15, 22, and 24 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being unpatentable over US Patent 6,517,183 to Bruch et al. (Bruch). Claims 2-4, 9-11, 16, and 17 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Bruch in view of 6,752,483 to Vega et al. (Vega). Claims 5, 6, and 12 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Bruch in view of US Patent 6,419,3451 to Nohata et al. (Nohata). Applicant traverses these rejections.

As further set forth below, the Examiner has indicated the allowability of the subject matter introduced in Claims 18-21, 23, and 25 if rewritten in independent form and including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claim. In the interest of expediting the prosecution of the present application, Applicants have amended independent Claims 1, 8-10, 22, and 24 to include all of the limitations introduced in dependent Claims 18-21, 23, and 25, respectively. As such, independent Claims 1, 8-9, 22, and 24, as well as dependent Claims 2-7 and 11-17, are distinguished over Bruch, Vega, and Nohata, either alone or in combination.

Accordingly, the rejections under 35 U.S.C. §§ 102(e) and 103(a) should be withdrawn.

Allowable Subject Matter

The Examiner has objected to Claims 18-21, 23, and 25 as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claim. Applicants concur with the Examiner's findings.

CONCLUSION

Applicants respectfully submit that Claims 1-17, 22, and 24 are in condition for allowance and a notice to that effect is earnestly solicited.

AUTHORIZATIONS:

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fees which may be required for the timely consideration of this amendment, or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 13-4500, Order No. 1232-5200.

Respectfully submitted,

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Date: May 23, 2006

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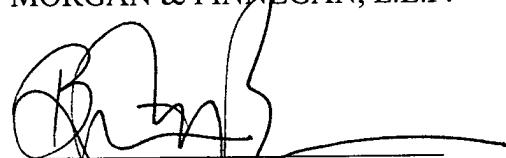
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